Dear FCC:

As a consumer of VRS services, I strongly support the petition to require VRS interoperability. I find it extremely annoying and frustrating that different VRS providers are allowed to block their equipment from being able to contact other providers. I've noticed that since VRS interpreters have become so popular, the wait times often exceed 10 or 20 minutes. It's frustrating enough when waiting so long for a personal call. However, if one is trying to place an emergency call, a 10 or 20 minute wait is completely unacceptable. By allowing equipment to be interoperable, it will increase competition between the VRS providers, and hopefully reduce the overall hold times.

Additionally, I'm very unhappy with the fact that different VRS providers deliberately block (or make it difficult) to call each other. For example, users of the Sorenson VRS system often have problems calling people who are using the D-Link i2eye system, and vice versa.   This seems especially outrageous since this blocking is deliberate. The Black Crow, Sorenson and D-Link video phone products all use the same H323 standards, and should be able to communicate easily. Hearing callers using a regular telephone do not have this restriction. If I am a Verizon customer, nothing blocks me from from placing calls to an SBC customer and vice versa.

I believe that interoperability of these products is especially important because some of the VRS systems are not available for purchase by hearing customers. For example, the Sorenson VP-100 device is ONLY available to Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers. These devices are NOT available for sale, and so hearing friends, family and service providers cannot obtain a compatible device. Sorenson does offer free computer software that runs on Microsoft Windows, but even with a high-speed internet connection and a good-quality web cam, the video quality is NOT nearly as good as what is offered by the video phone devices.

Since the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that people with disabilities have equal access to public services, I strongly encourage the FCC to adopt a standard that requires all VRS systems to be interoperable, and for providers to be prohibited from blocking their equipment from calling competing VRS vendors.

Sincerely,

D. A. Taylor